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AUTHOR Smith, Cyrus F., Jr.; Harrison, Margaret Drumm
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ABSTRACT

To determine if different graded word lists can be used interchangeably for assessment purposes, and to determine if age, grade, or sex affects performance on the different graded word lists, a study examined the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT), Levels I and II, the San Diego Quick Assessment, and the Graded Word Reading Test by F.J. Schonell. The three lists were administered to 283 pupils in grades 3 through 12. The word lists were collated in random order and were administered over a two-week period. Results showed that mean scores on the WRAT I, WRAT II, and the Graded Word Reading Test were relatively consistent and all correlation coefficients were significant at the .01 level. However, the mean score on the San Diego Quick Assessment was about one year below the other two. Mean scores for boys and for girls with the San Diego Quick Assessment were 5.05 and 5.79 respectively. No such differences were found for the Graded Word Reading Test or for either form of the WRAT. Conclusions suggest that the San Diego Quick Assessment should be used cautiously when making comparisons within a mixed group. (HOD)

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A Comparative Analysis of Three Widely Used Graded Word Reading Tests

By

Cyrus F. Smith, Jr.
and
Margaret Drumm Harrison

Reading teachers and clinicians frequently use graded word lists for evaluative purposes. Some word lists have been standardized (Spache, 1981; Jastak and Jastak, 1978) in terms of directions and scoring procedures, and norm references are provided for comparative purposes. Other word lists (San Diego Quick Assessment, LaPray and Ross, 1969), provide directions for administration and scoring but no norms are provided. These and other graded word lists are commonly used to determine an entry level for a more rigorous diagnostic test, to obtain knowledge of a student's word attack skills, to match students with instructional materials, and as formative and summative assessment instruments.

A question that is often raised regarding the use of graded word lists centers on the appropriateness of using them as indicators of the ability to read extended prose discourse. A study by Froese (1976) indicates there may be some validity in this practice. Froese found a highly significant relationship between word list reading and prose reading for pupils in Grades 1 through 6. Froese (1971) also noted that while positive correlations exist between scores on graded word lists, the grade level equivalents could differ significantly. This finding is important in that it casts some doubt on the reliability of using different word lists interchangeably to reduce the effect of familiarity. The purposes of this study are to determine if different graded word lists

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can be used interchangeably for assessment purposes, and to determine if age, grade or sex affects performance on the different graded word lists.

Method

The graded word lists that were examined in this study were the Wide Range Achievement Test, Levels I and II (Jastak and Jastak, 1978), the San Diego Quick Assessment (LaPray and Ross, 1969), and the Graded Word Reading Test (Schonell, 1966). The three lists were administered to 283 pupils in grades 3 through 12. The students attended both urban and suburban schools in southeastern Wisconsin. The sample was representative of a school-age population in that it consisted of average, above average and below average readers. The sample consisted of approximately equal numbers of male (149) and female (129) students. All students were English-speaking and represented a cross-section of socio-economic backgrounds. Equal numbers of the students selected were enrolled in grades 3-6 and 7-12, respectively.

The word lists were collated in random order (i.e., care was taken to ensure that the order of the tests was rotated to minimize the effects of test wiseness or familiarity with the procedure) and were administered over a two-week period by classroom teachers who were graduate students enrolled in the reading teacher and reading specialist training programs at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The graduate students received sufficient training and practice in the administration of each word list prior to the testing period.

Testing was conducted according to standard directions appropriate for each word list. The administration and scoring were monitored. Each set of word lists was examined a minimum of three times. This was done

to ensure that protocols were followed regarding the accuracy of scoring. Five packets were eliminated because of incomplete student information, improper administration, or incomplete scoring. The breakdown of the final sample of 278 is as follows: Grade 3, N=29; Grade 4, N=36; Grade 5, N=44; Grade 6, N=44; Grade 7, N=20; Grade 8, N=25; Grade 9, N=21; Grade 10, N=25; Grade 11, N=14; Grade 12, N=20.

Results

The first purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between scores obtained from students on different graded word lists in order to determine if the word lists could be used interchangeably. Even though the word lists associated with WRAT I and WRAT II are to be given to youngsters between the ages of 6-11 and 12-18, respectively, all 278 pupils were administered both forms of the WRAT in addition to the San Diego Quick Assessment and the Graded Word Reading Test.

Table I presents mean scores and standard deviations obtained on each word list for the total sample.

Table I

Grade Level Means and Standard Deviations, All Cases

Word List	N	$\bar{X}$	s.d.
WRAT I	278	6.35	1.86
WRAT II	278	6.35	2.13
SDQA	278	5.39	2.78
GWRT	278	6.22	2.15

Table II presents mean scores and standard deviations obtained on each word list for subjects in grades 3-6 (WRAT I) and 7-12 (WRAT II).

Table II

Grade Level Means and Standard Deviations By Grade

Word List	N	$\bar{X}$	s.d.
Grades 3-6			
WRAT I	139	5.67	1.66
SDQA	139	4.47	2.10
GWRT	139	5.39	1.83
Grades 7-12			
WRAT II	139	7.24	2.29
SDQA	139	6.32	3.07
GWRT	139	7.05	2.14

Table III presents correlation coefficients calculated for the four word lists examined.

Table III

Correlation Coefficients for All Cases

	WRAT I	WRAT II	SDQA	GWRT
WRAT I		.9042**	.8614**	.9207**
WRAT II			.8790**	.9111**
SDQA				.8720**
GWRT				

**p < .01

All coefficients are significant at the .01 level. Additional coefficients were calculated for half of the sample. That is to say, scores obtained by students ages 6-11 (WRAT I) and 12-18 (WRAT II) were then compared to the San Diego and the Graded Word Reading Test. These coefficients are presented in Table IV.

TABLE IV

Correlation Coefficients for Appropriate Cases

	WRAT I	WRAT II	SDQA	GWRT
WRAT I		.9042**	.8629**	.9076**
WRAT II			.8642**	.8876**
SDQA				.8720**
GWRT				

**p < .01

Mean scores on the WRAT I, WRAT II, and the Graded Word Reading Test are relatively consistent, and all correlation coefficients are significant at the .01 level. However, the mean score on the San Diego Quick Assessment is about one year below the other three. These findings are consistent with Froese (1971) and Smith and McManis (1977). Specifically, Froese indicated that positive correlations on word lists exist but that variation can occur in grade level equivalents. Smith and McManis indicate that WRAT scores may be inflated by as much as one year. The fact that scores obtained on the San Diego Quick Assessment in the current study are about a year less may be an indication that it is a more accurate measure for predicting grade level equivalents than either the WRAT or the Graded Word Reading Test. Before this contention can be confirmed, however, a more rigorous analysis is needed in which either group survey or individual diagnostic tests of reading are used.

A second purpose of this study was to determine if age, grade or sex would affect performance on the different graded word lists. A series of one-way analyses of variance were calculated for each word list using the variables age, grade and sex.

Table V

One-Way ANOVA, San Diego Quick Assessment By Sex

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	38.17	38.17	5.01	.026*
Within Groups	276	2105.22	7.63		
Total	277	2143.39			

*p < .05

The only significant F ratio was with the San Diego Quick Assessment and sex, p < .05 (see Table V). Mean scores for boys (N=149) and girls (N=129) were 5.05 and 5.79, respectively. No such differences were found for the Graded Word Reading Test or for either form of the WRAT.

It appears that the appropriate level of the WRAT, the San Diego Quick Assessment and the Graded Word Reading Test can be used alternatively as informal measures for determining reading level estimates. However, the San Diego Quick Assessment provides a score which is approximately one year lower than the other two. While this score may be a more accurate estimate of reading level, it is influenced by the sex of the student. This is not to say that use of the San Diego Quick Assessment should be discontinued; rather, it should be used cautiously when making comparisons within a mixed group.

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